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AUTHOR Leigh, Cindy; And Others
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ABSTRACT

This staff development guide provides a description of the kindergarten; overviews of kindergarten classroom learning centers; and transparencies for use in a teacher training workshop. The description of the kindergarten briefly focuses on the definition and philosophy of the kindergarten; the history of the kindergarten; principles of kindergarten education; and areas of the kindergarten curriculum. Centers overviewed include housekeeping, blocks, library, art, science, game/manipulatives, language arts, math, music, woodworking, cooking, and sand/water centers. Educational aims of each center are listed. Much of the guide consists of designs for transparencies. (RH)

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DESCRIPTION OF THE KINDERGARTEN

A Staff Development Guide

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JUNE 1987



DESCRIPTION OF THE KINDERGARTEN

A STAFF DEVELOPMENT GUIDE

Mississippi State Department of Education
Bureau of School Improvement
Curriculum Office

June, 1987

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The guide was written and prepared by:

Cindy Leigh, Ed.D., Director, Early
Childhood Leadership Institute

Peggy Emerson, Ed.D., Assistant Dean

Lina L. Owens, Doctoral Candidate

Department of Curriculum and Instruction
School of Education
University of Mississippi
University, Mississippi 38677

MISSISSIPPI STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
BUREAU OF SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT
Walter Sillers Office Building
Suite 1304
Jackson, MS 39205
(601) 359-3768

Ralph Brewer, Ed.D., Director
Jack Gunn, Ed.D., Director, Division of Program Implementation
Donna Lander, Ph.D., Curriculum Coordinator
John Barlow, Elementary Curriculum Coordinator

INTRODUCTION

Description of the Kindergarten

In this workshop session, the participants will receive information about the philosophy of the kindergarten, history of the kindergarten, principles of child development, and organization of the kindergarten.

Show Transparency In-1. Let participants discuss the questions briefly. Then continue with the material below.

A. Definition and Philosophy of the Kindergarten.

Kindergarten refers to schools designed for five-year old children. Kindertgartens are the most prevalent type of program for young children.

The kindergarten is built on the philosophy that children learn best in an environment that provides opportunities for free exploration and progression at their own developmental rate. For an assistant teacher, this means that the classroom must be informal and inviting to children. In an informal setting, children have freedom to move about, make observations, and discuss their observations. Children are encouraged to risk being wrong and are supported in their eagerness to explore.

Whether the program is successful or not, depends in large part upon you, as the assistant teacher, and the knowledge you have of early childhood education and the importance of "play." Some understanding of how the kindergarten concept began can help you to appreciate the "hands-on" exploratory philosophy.

B. History of the Kindergarten.

Use Transparency In-2. As you discuss the persons, uncover their names and their accomplishments. You might want to uncover only the name and see if any participants are familiar with the names.

Frederick Froebel started the first kindergarten in Germany in 1837. He believed that school experiences should be planned to fit the needs of young children and that play was

an essential part of education. Froebel introduced activities based on use of concrete experiences. He called the kindergarten a "child's garden" and believed that children should learn through real life experiences like housekeeping, gardening, and concrete manipulatives.

In 1860, Elizabeth Peabody, a student of Froebelian philosophy, established the first English-speaking kindergarten in Boston. Peabody was influential in gaining public support in kindergartens. However, during the span of her work, kindergartens became more structured and a more defined curriculum was established.

In 1873, Susan Blow opened the first public supported kindergarten in St. Louis, Missouri. Although Blow was a believer in the Froebelian methods, other educators had started to question the structured curriculum. They contended that American children had little in common with German children. These educators thought that kindergartens should meet the needs of the children with whom they were working.

Finally Patty Smith Hill led a movement away from the highly structured kindergarten. Hill supported many of the Froebelian ideas but she emphasized free play, social interaction, and the arts.

Another prominent figure in kindergarten education was Maria Montessori (1870-1952). Although she was the first woman in Italy to receive a medical degree, she is best known for her contributions in education. Montessori believed that children learn through direct sensory experiences and exploration. She stressed an attractive, clean, child-sized environment with movable furniture. She created sequential materials to teach specific concepts. These learning materials can still be purchased today and Montessori based programs are popular in many countries.

Jean Piaget, a Swiss child psychologist, had a dramatic impact on education. Piaget's research indicated that children progress through a series of cognitive, intellectual stages. Kindergarten children are generally in the second stage, which he called "preoperational". Piaget felt that children at this stage must have real, concrete objects which they can manipulate, talking about the objects was not enough. Piaget also stressed that children move to the next level of development when they are physically and experimentally ready. Teachers must make materials and experiences available to support developmental growth but they cannot force the cognitive development.

Recent Piagetian psychologist, Constance Kamii, stresses the importance of adult interaction with kindergarten children. If teachers hope to stimulate children's learning, they must

observe and listen to children. Then they can help the child construct or organize the new knowledge.

In recent years, many programs have rejected the goals initially set forth by Froebel, Hill, Montessori, and Piaget. Children are treated as little adults and academic excellence is stressed. David Elkind, author of The Hurried Child, cautions that the preoccupation with academic excellence harms the child. Research shows that children learn at their own rate when they are physically and psychologically ready. Also, research reports that, after the first two years of school, earlier readers show no significant academic advantage over late readers.

What does this mean? Slow down! Let children be children and learn in their own way. Children are born with curiosity, so let them use it. Teachers must provide the opportunities and children will do the rest.

C. Principles of Kindergarten Education.

Teachers must know and practice basic child development principles known to be of benefit to children. Several of the principles include:

Use Transparency In-3. Uncover each principle separately. Ask participants to react to each principle and what it means to them. Then extend their reactions with your own explanations. Be sure to accept all responses since you have asked what it means to them; however, in your extension you can emphasize the usual meaning.

1. A child learns as a total person. (A child develops emotionally, socially, and physically, as well as intellectually.)
2. Children grow through similar stages of development but at individual rates and in individual styles. (Each child is an individual and develops at his/her own rate. Activities must be planned for many levels of development.)
3. Children learn best when many senses are involved. (Learning activities should include as many senses as possible: seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, and touching.)

4. Children learn best by being actively involved. (This active learning involves playing, exploring, manipulating, and problem solving through all of the senses.)
5. Children receive information in many ways. The method of reception may be as significant to their learning as the information they receive. (Methods, climate, atmosphere, and teacher attitude affect learning).
6. Children learn in different ways. (Activities should be varied using different types of materials and approaches.)
7. Children learn from both individual and group experiences. (Children learn to deal with the attitudes and beliefs of others as well as their own.)
8. Children's attitudes and feelings affect learning. (Emotions play a significant role in children's learning. If a child becomes extremely frightened or unhappy, the cerebral cortex may "shut down," making it impossible for higher levels of thinking to occur. When this happens the child can no longer think logically and reasonably, because the midbrain (which controls the emotions) has taken over. The child can perform only basic rote memory. The teacher should give the child adequate time to calm down before returning to the task.)

D. Areas of the Kindergarten Curriculum.

Kindergartens in Mississippi are planned to provide learning opportunities to children in a number of areas. The kindergarten is divided into spaces called learning centers. These areas are emphasized in the required classroom organizational patterns that encompass all areas of the curriculum.

Use Transparency In-4. Name each center that is recommended for inclusion in the kindergarten curriculum.

Centers recommended include:

- | | |
|-----------------------|------------------|
| 1. Housekeeping | 7. Language Arts |
| 2. Blocks | 8. Math |
| 3. Library (Books) | 9. Music |
| 4. Art | 10. Woodworking |
| 5. Science | 11. Cooking |
| 6. Game/Manipulatives | 12. Sand/Water |

HOUSEKEEPING CENTER

Overview of the Housekeeping Center.

Use Transparency H-1. Show this transparency while giving the brief overview below.

The housekeeping center contains materials and equipment with which the children are familiar. Since the materials are familiar, the children will feel comfortable using this center.

The housekeeping center should include child size props such as stove, refrigerator, sink, and other household items. The center can easily be changed by adding additional props. A cash register, food items, and paper bags can change the center into a grocery store. Add a stethoscope, white jackets, and dolls and the center becomes a hospital.

The possibilities for dramatic play in this center are unlimited.

Benefits of the Housekeeping Center.

Use Transparency H-2. Have the participants tell the benefits of the housekeeping center. List their responses on the overhead. Include the following benefits.

Through dramatic play in the housekeeping center, the child will:

- a. develop small and large muscle control;
- b. increase language and communication skills;
- c. learn self-help skills;
- d. learn facts about self and people in his environment;
- e. engage in role playing related to home and other familiar experiences; and
- f. develop socially by interacting with others.

BLOCK CENTER

Overview of the Block Center.

Show Transparency B-1. Give the brief overview below.

The block center will be one of the most popular and beneficial centers in the classroom if handled correctly.

The block center encourages talking and movement so it should be placed away from the quiet centers such as the library center or language arts center.

Consideration should also be given to arrangement of the center. The block center needs to have definite boundaries to curtail blockbuilding to a specific area. The center should be away from regular traffic flow. This will limit children passing through and knocking down blocks.

The center will contain blocks of different sizes and shapes. The blocks may either be commercially made or homemade. Throughout the year, different props may be added to the center relating to the unit being studied. Cars, trucks, trains, and airplanes can encourage blockbuilding during the study of transportation. Add zoo animals to the center and the children might build a zoo.

Benefits of the Block Center.

Show Transparency B-2. Have participants list the benefits of the block center. List their responses on the overhead. Make sure the following benefits are included.

Through participating in the block center, the child will:

- a. develop large and small muscle control;
- b. develop social skills through interacting with others;
- c. learn mathematical concepts such as size, shape, balance, and counting;
- d. engage in dramatic play that encourages creativity; and
- e. develop visual discrimination.

LIBRARY CENTER

Overview of the Library Center.

Show Transparency L-1 while giving the following brief overview.

The library center should provide a comfortable place for children to use books. The books should be placed on low shelves that the children can reach. A rug can help define the library center and provide a comfortable place to sit. You might want to add cushions, pillows, or beanbag chairs to provide a cozy atmosphere.

The location of the library center is important. The center should be placed in a quiet area away from the regular traffic flow. When considering placement of this center, keep in mind activities in adjacent centers. Avoid situating the library near noisy or distracting areas.

Benefits of the Library Center.

Use Transparency L-2. Have participants list the benefits seen in this picture. List their responses on the overhead. Make sure the following benefits are included.

While using the materials in the library center, the child will:

- a. learn to love and appreciate good literature;
- b. increase vocabulary and enhance language development;
- c. realize that books give information;
- d. develop reading readiness skills (read from left to right and from top to bottom);
- e. learn to respect and take care of books;
- f. interact with other children; and
- g. develop an awareness of rhythm and sounds.

ART CENTER

Overview of the Art Center.

Show Transparency A-1 while giving the following overview.

The art center should be inviting and encourage children to use a variety of art media. The center should encourage the children to discover and create new shapes and forms. The materials should be changed often or a variety of materials should be available at all times for the children to use in their creations.

The center should be multisensory and engage the children's senses of seeing, smelling, hearing, touching, and tasting (when possible).

Art activities are closely related to reading and writing skills. The children learn to make strokes, lines, and curves which they will use in writing. The children will see the same strokes in the alphabet and later in reading. The children will realize that they can express their ideas through symbols or forms and then "read" what they have drawn. Children continue this process of literacy acquisition throughout life.

The art center can help children develop a positive self-concept. Children take the creation process seriously and our response to their creations has a direct impact on their self-concepts. As teachers, we must remember that we are interested in the process and not the finished product.

Benefits of the Art Center.

Show Transparency A-2. Look at the two children and their finished art products. Ask participants to think of benefits for the two finished products. List the benefits on the overhead. Make sure the following benefits are listed.

Through encouraging the child to engage in the creative process, the teacher ensures that the child will:

- a. develop creativity, imagination, and self-expression;
- b. develop a positive attitude toward him/herself;

- c. learn about colors through exploration;
- d. develop reading and writing readiness;
- e. release his/her feelings through art--both negative and positive;
- f. learn to value the work of others;
- g. learn that everyone is unique and expresses him/herself differently; and
- h. learn that art is individual, there is no right or wrong way.

Through the teacher assembled art product, the child will only learn to follow directions.

SCIENCE CENTER

Overview of the Science Center.

Show Transparency S-1 while giving the brief overview.

The science center invites children to explore, examine, and discover without the fear of being wrong. With free and guided exploration, the children learn factual information through hands-on experiences.

The science center can be one of the most exciting and popular centers in the kindergarten room if handled correctly. The science center should be changed often and should correlate with the unit of study if possible.

Correct placement of the science center is crucial to ensure maximum benefits from it. The center should be close to a window for weather, plant, animal, and seasonal observation. A sink should be close to the science center for plant and animal care. Water is also essential for many experiments and clean-up. The science center will need an electrical outlet for an aquarium and other experiments.

Benefits of the Science Center.

Show Transparency S-2. Ask participants to look closely at the science center and share the benefits they can find in the picture. List the responses on the overhead.

Through participating in the science center, the child will:

- a. learn about his environment;
- b. learn to be inquisitive;
- c. learn to find answers through investigation;
- d. increase his/her sense awareness;
- e. develop respect for the environment;
- f. learn about caring for plants and animals; and
- g. increase his/her vocabulary.

GAME/MANIPULATIVE CENTER

Overview of the Game/Manipulative Center.

Use Transparency G-1 and give brief overview. Discuss questions on the transparency.

The game/manipulative center may be incorporated into other centers. However, the teacher may wish to designate one area of the classroom as the game center.

This center should be located in a relatively quiet place. Since the children will be talking and playing, this center fits nicely beside the art or math center.

The game center should include a variety of manipulative activities such as puzzles, board games, lacing cards, sequence card, mazes, and a computer. The games should be stored on low shelves when not in use. This allows the table to be used for other activities.

Benefits of the Game/Manipulative Center.

Use Transparency G-2. Ask participants what they see in the game center that would be beneficial to children. List their responses on the overhead.

Through participating in the game/manipulative center, the child will:

- a. develop visual discrimination;
- b. develop auditory memory;
- c. learn about computers--they are fun and easy to operate;
- d. develop social skills by interacting with other children;
- e. develop oral language skills by talking with other students; and
- f. develop small muscle control.

LANGUAGE ARTS CENTER

Overview of the Language Arts Center.

Use Transparency LA-1. Give brief overview and discuss the questions on the transparency.

The language arts center is devoted to the development of oral language, reading readiness, writing, and listening skills.

This center emphasizes language development. Research shows that children increase in their use of language through conversation and written expression. Children learn oral language through talking; writing skills through writing; listening skills through listening; and reading readiness skills through activities that emphasize letters, sounds, and words.

The language arts center should be placed in a quiet area of the room where children can work without being interrupted.

It should also be noted that language arts is taught throughout the day in all areas of the curriculum. In everything the children do, they are talking, writing, listening, and/or reading.

Benefits of the Language Arts Center.

Use Transparency LA-2. This transparency shows the four major language arts areas. Have participants tell the benefits of the language arts center. List their responses under the appropriate area.

Through participation in this center, the child will:

- a. develop oral language skills through talking with others;
- b. develop writing skills through drawing and writing activities;
- c. develop listening skills through listening activities;
- d. develop reading readiness skills; and
- e. develop social skills.

MATH CENTER

Overview of the Mathematics or Math Center.

Use Transparency M-1 during the overview.

The mathematics center contains materials which the children can manipulate and explore without the fear of being wrong. Through exploration and manipulation children gain an understanding of basic math concepts.

The mathematics center should contain manipulative objects such as geoboards, pegboards, attribute blocks, a calendar, matching games, and beads. You can add to the benefit of the manipulatives by asking children to reproduce patterns and sequences. As the children work with patterns and explore materials freely, they are laying a foundation for future math work.

The mathematics center requires the children to manipulate small objects. The children must be able to work quietly without being disturbed. The math center should be close to a quiet area away from the regular traffic flow.

Benefits of the Math Center.

Use Transparency M-2. Have participants list the benefits they observe by looking at the manipulatives on the transparency. List the responses on the overhead. Make sure the following benefits are listed.

Through manipulation and exploration of mathematics materials, the child will:

- a. enrich his/her vocabulary. The child learns mathematical terms such as alike, different, equal, and less, as well as, position words, measurement terms, and geometric shapes;
- b. develop thinking skills;
- c. increase cognitive skills (one-to-one correspondence, counting, shapes, graphs, and charts); and
- d. develop small muscle coordination.

MUSIC CENTER

Overview of the Music Center.

Show Transparency MU-1. Have participants discuss the questions on the transparency.

If presented appropriately, the music center will appeal to most young children. The center should allow the children to experiment with a variety of materials that make sounds. By experimenting with the materials, children learn to create their own simple tunes and rhythms.

Children love to listen to music. A record player or cassette player with headphones allows the child privacy while enjoying music.

Children need to be exposed to all types of music, so provide a variety of music in the center. Music should include both fast, slow, loud, and soft pieces. Also, include classical, jazz, country, easy-listening, and rock selections. Remember that the only exposure to different types of music some children will have is in your classroom.

Benenfits of the Music Center.

Use Transparency MU-2. Have participants think of benefits for each musical item pictured. Be sure the participants include these reasons.

In the music center, the child will:

- a. listen to and enjoy different types of music;
- b. express his/her feelings through movement and music;
- c. listen to and become aware of musical concepts such as high and low, fast and slow, loud and soft;
- d. develop auditory discrimination;
- e. participate in creating sounds and rhythms;
- f. increase his/her vocabulary through listening and singing;
- g. develop small and large muscle control; and
- h. communicate his/her feelings through music.

WOODWORKING CENTER

Overview of the Woodworking Center.

Use Transparency W-1 while discussing the brief overview.

The woodworking center contains materials and equipment that are often forbidden to children. The smallest sized adult tools are usually appropriate for use by children. Close supervision is needed in the beginning to ensure that children handle the tools safely. Safety in the use of woodworking equipment is of primary importance. This center is immediately self-correcting and children learn quickly to be careful. However, teachers must insist that children handle tools safely to avoid being hurt.

The woodworking center should be away from the kindergarten room if possible. At this center, children should be able to make as much noise as needed for their project. There is no quiet way to hammer and saw. Therefore, place this center in another room or on a covered porch so that the children will be able to work without being constantly reminded to be quiet. This will also prevent children in other centers from being disturbed.

The woodworking center will be popular with children at this age. Make sure the tools are child sized and can be used independently. Tools should be replaced by the children after they finish working. This will teach them to take care of tools and to keep the center safe.

Benefits of the Woodworking Center.

Use Transparency W-2. In the picture two children are working together on a project. Ask the participants to name the benefits to children working in this center. List their responses on the overhead.

In the woodworking center, the child will:

- a. learn proper and safe use of tools;
- b. develop eye-hand coordination;
- c. develop social skills by interacting with others;

- d. develop large and small muscle control;
- e. develop creativity; and
- f. learn factual information about science and math.

COOKING CENTER

Overview of the Cooking Center.

Use Transparency C-1, while giving a brief overview of the cooking center. When you get to the safety rules, ask participants to answer the question on the transparency.

The cooking center contains materials and equipment with which the children are familiar. Since the children are familiar with many of the items, they will feel comfortable trying out new experiences.

The cooking center can be placed in a noisy or quiet area of the room. The children will be relatively quiet while cooking. Also, the children at the cooking center get so involved in the cooking experience that noise does not distract them.

If it is well planned, the cooking center will be one of the most popular centers. Try to make activities as independent as possible but do provide close supervision. When cooking with children, remember these basic safety rules.

- a. Children should not use electrical appliances alone.
- b. Extension cords on the floor should be taped down.
- c. All cups and bowls should be plastic--not glass.
- d. Shelves need to be low enough so children can easily reach them.

Benefits of the Cooking Center.

Use Transparency C-2. Allow participants to list the benefits they see in this center.

In the cooking center, the child will:

- a. use his/her senses;
- b. develop fine motor skills;
- c. develop social skills;

- d. increase communication skills and oral vocabulary; and
- e. learn math and science concepts.

SAND/WATERPLAY CENTER

Overview of the Sand/Waterplay Center.

Use Transparency S/W-1, while giving a brief overview. Discuss questions with participants.

The sand/waterplay center will probably not have a permanent space in the kindergarten classroom. However, each week some time should be provided for work with these materials. If the weather permits, this center can easily be outside or perhaps it can be in the woodworking room. This way children can work with the sand/waterplay center when children are not in the woodworking center.

All children like to play with natural materials and this center gives them an excellent opportunity. Children will learn about the natural materials through manipulation and exploration.

This center requires little expense in its initial set up. Parents will be glad to donate cups, pails, towels, pitchers, funnels, etc. Just remind parents that the items must be plastic and not glass.

Benefits of the Sand/Waterplay Center.

Show Transparency S/W-2. Let participants list the benefits of children using this center. Make sure the following benefits are included in the list. Write the list on the overhead.

Through using the sand/waterplay center, the child will:

- a. discover the characteristics of water and sand;
- b. develop a positive self-concept;
- c. develop large and small muscle control;
- d. increase oral vocabulary;
- e. learn mathematics and science facts through exploration; and
- f. develop social skills.

SUMMARY

To fully understand the kindergarten program and the principles of child development, further reading is strongly recommended. Observation in selected kindergarten classrooms would give support to the "Description of the Kindergarten" presented in this workshop.

TRANSPARENCIES
FOR
DESCRIPTION OF THE KINDERGARTEN

Why do I go to kindergarten?



Kindergartens

1. What is a kindergarten?
2. What is the philosophy?
3. When did they start?
4. Why did they start?
5. What are the principles?
6. What do they teach?

Early Childhood Films
presents
Kindergarten's Creation
starring

* Fredrick Froebel *

started first kindergarten in Germany
children learn through real life experiences

* Elizabeth Peabody *

started first English-speaking kindergarten

* Susan Blow *

opened first public supported kindergarten

* Maria Montessori *

stressed sensory experiences and child-sized environment

* Jean Piaget *

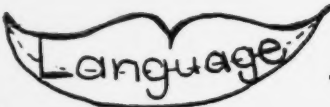
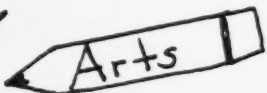
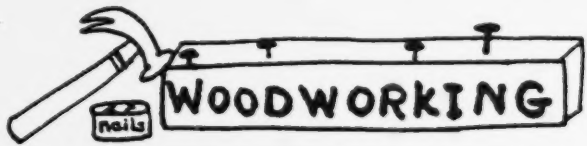
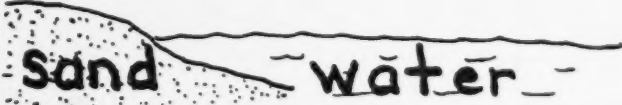
revealed that children progress through cognitive,
intellectual stages.



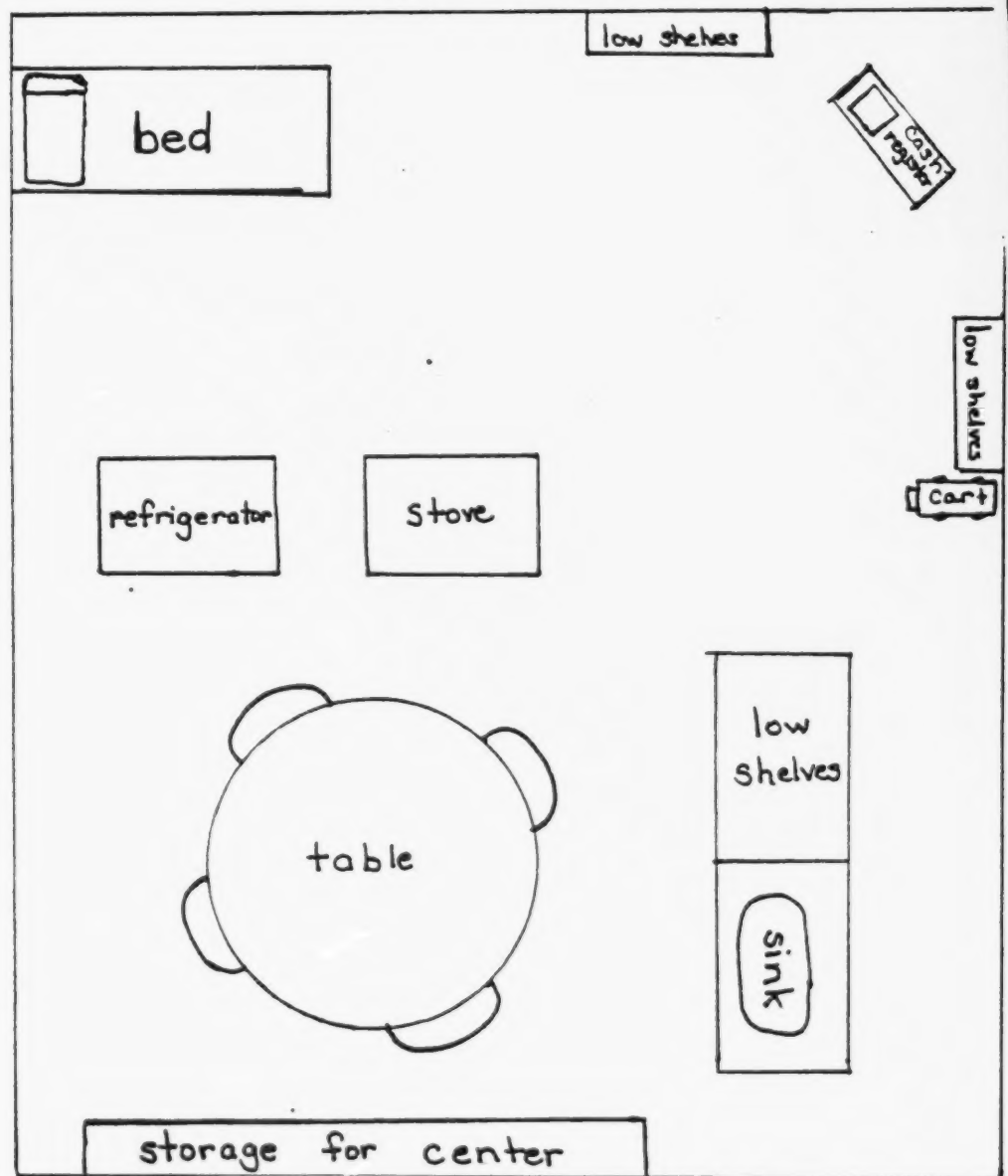
PRINCIPLES OF CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

1. A child learns as a total person.
2. Children grow through similar stages of development, but at individual rates and in individual styles.
3. Children learn best when many senses are involved.
4. Children learn best by being actively involved.
5. Children receive information in many ways. The method of reception may be as significant to their learning as the information they receive.
6. Children learn in different ways.
7. Children learn from both individual and group experiences.
8. Children's attitudes and feelings affect learning.

Learning Centers

Housekeeping Center



What types of dramatic play could hap

Kim's Beauty
Shop



What benefits do you see?

Block Center

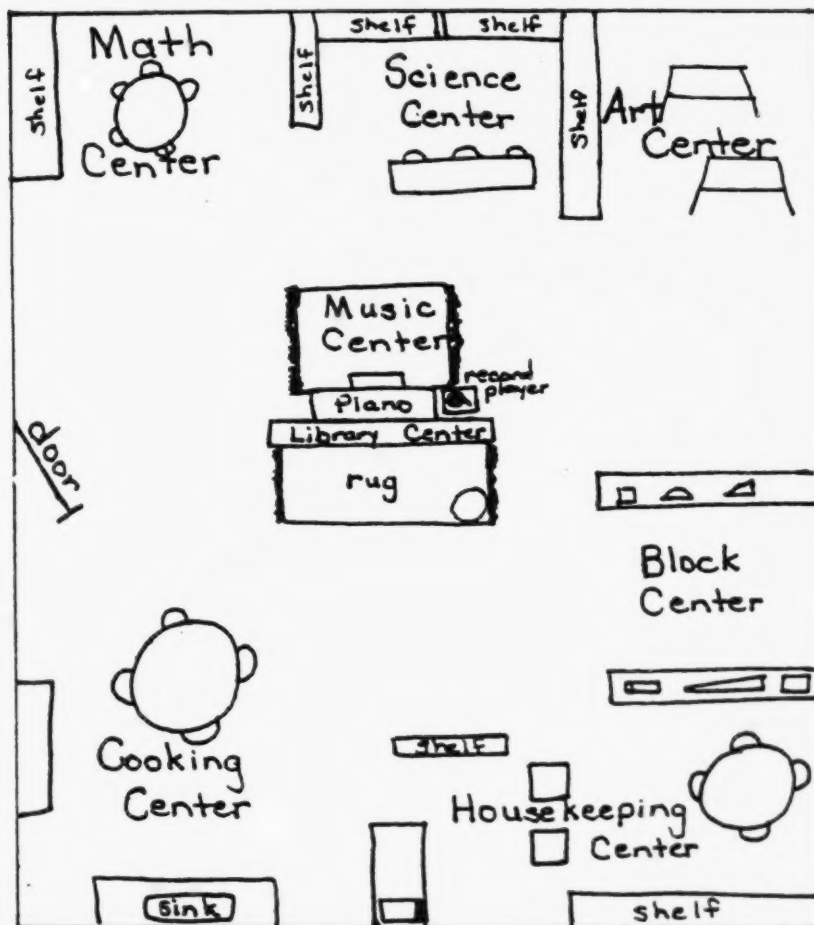


What must the teacher do to keep this center safe and fun?



What benefits would children receive from the block center?

Library Center

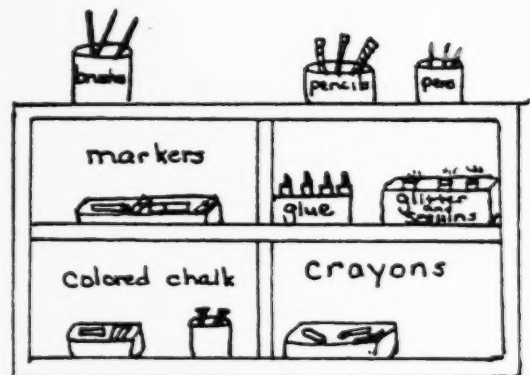
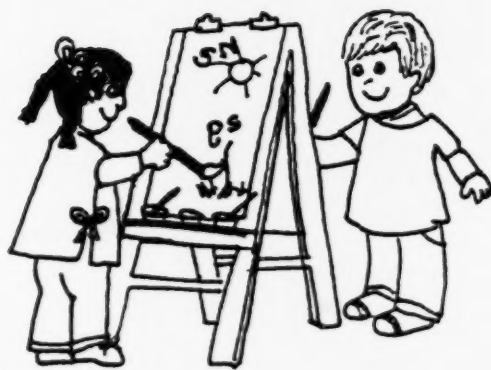


Find the library center.
Do you see anything wrong? What?



What benefits do you see?

Art Center



What do you see happening?
Why is this activity important?



What are the benefits?

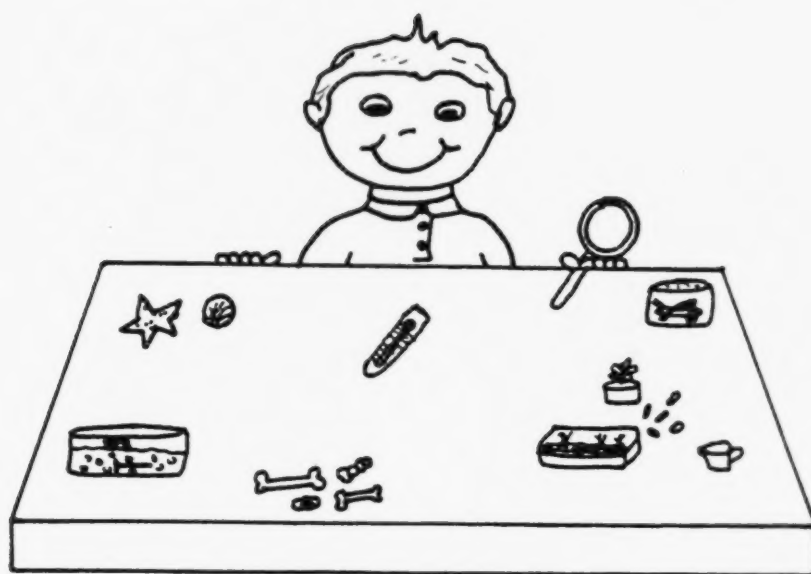


What are the benefits?

Science Center



When would you use this science center?
What would you add?

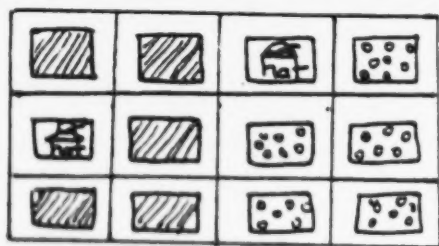


Here are some of the materials you will use in your science center this year.

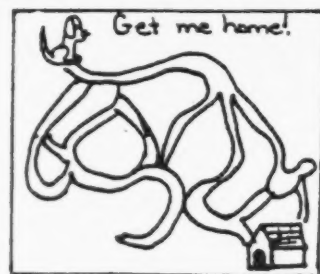
What benefits will the children receive?

● Game / Manipulative Center

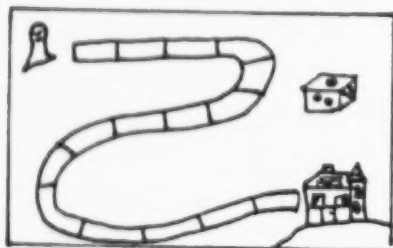
Could these games fit into other centers?
Which centers?



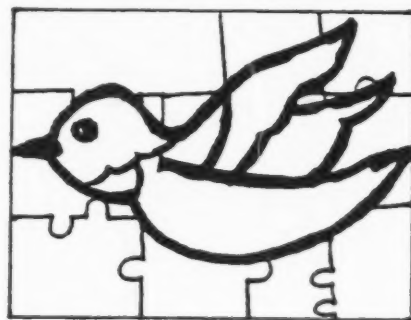
find - it



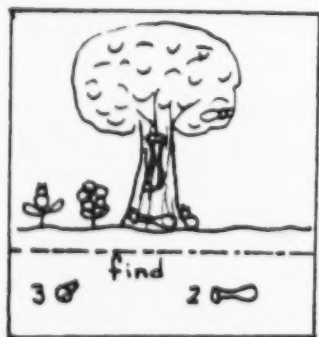
mazes



board games



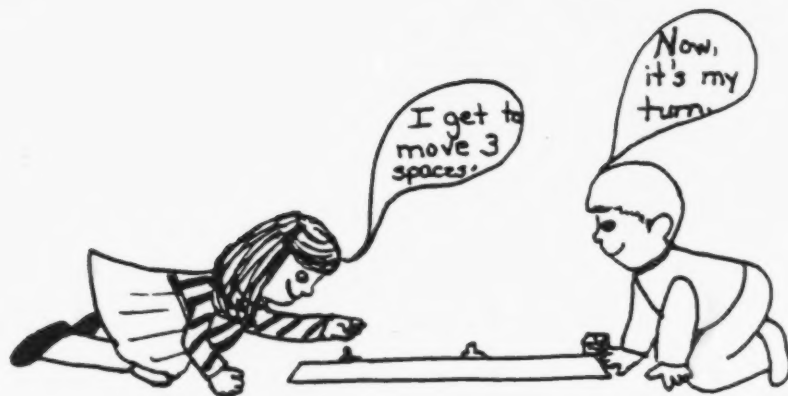
puzzles



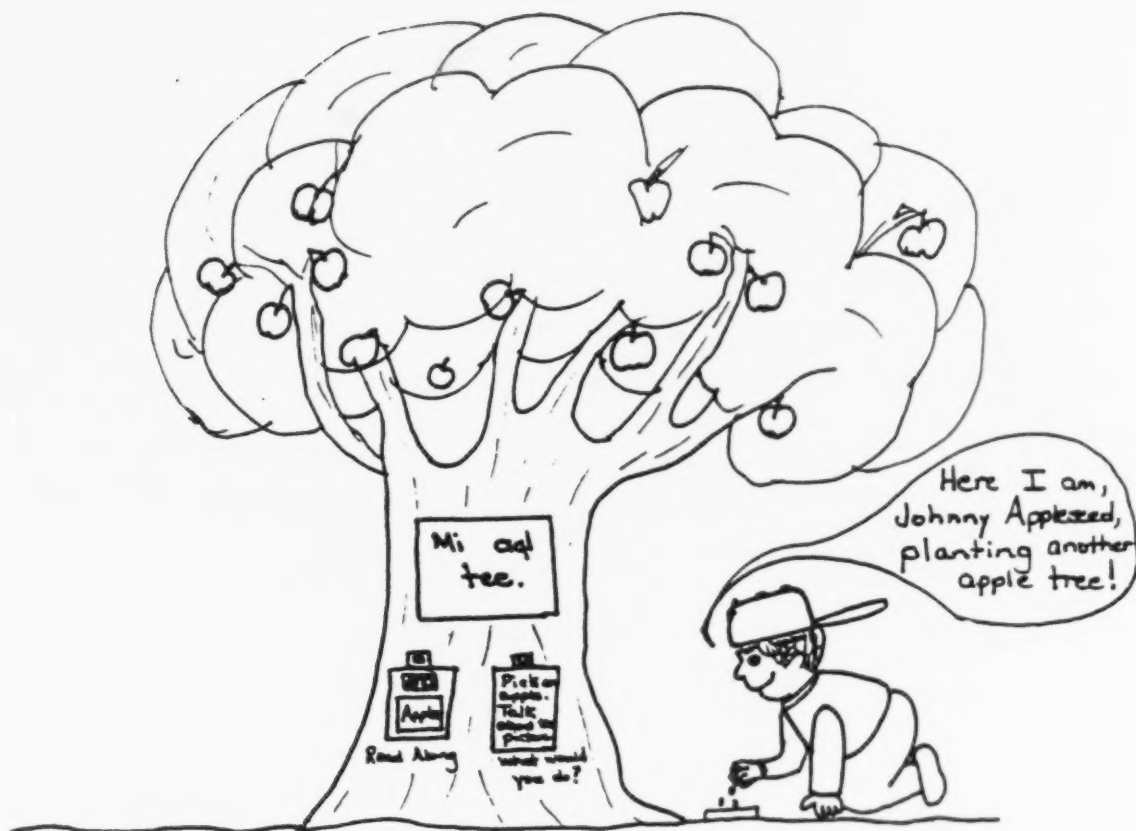
hidden pictures



sequence cards



Why are games important?



What language arts activities do
you see?

• Language Arts



writing



talking



listening

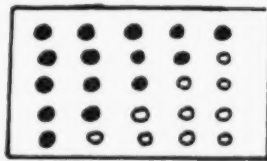


reading

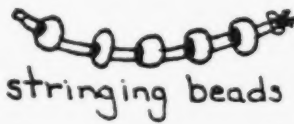
Math Center



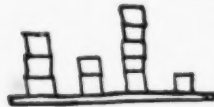
What activities could you add?



pegboard



stringing beads

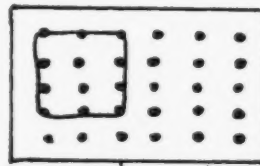


attribute blocks

Month

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11						

calendar



geoboards



measuring sets

Shoes			
Dean			
Tom			
Wyn			Ed
Lisa	Bob		Nick
tennis	slip on	boots	lace up

graphs and charts

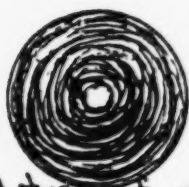


objects to count

What benefits would a child receive?

Music Center

What types would you include?



What types of records?

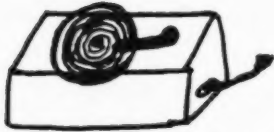


What types of instruments?



What types of movement?

What can you learn?



record player

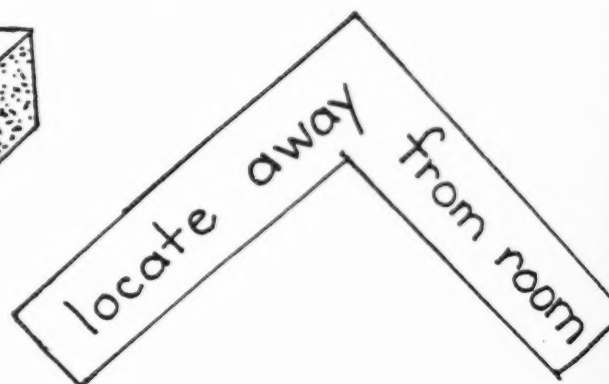
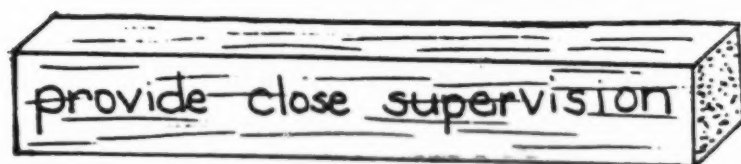
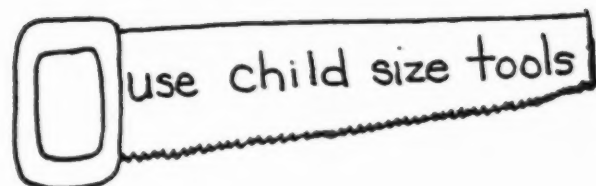
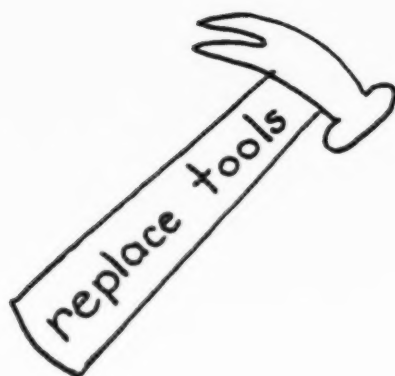


drum



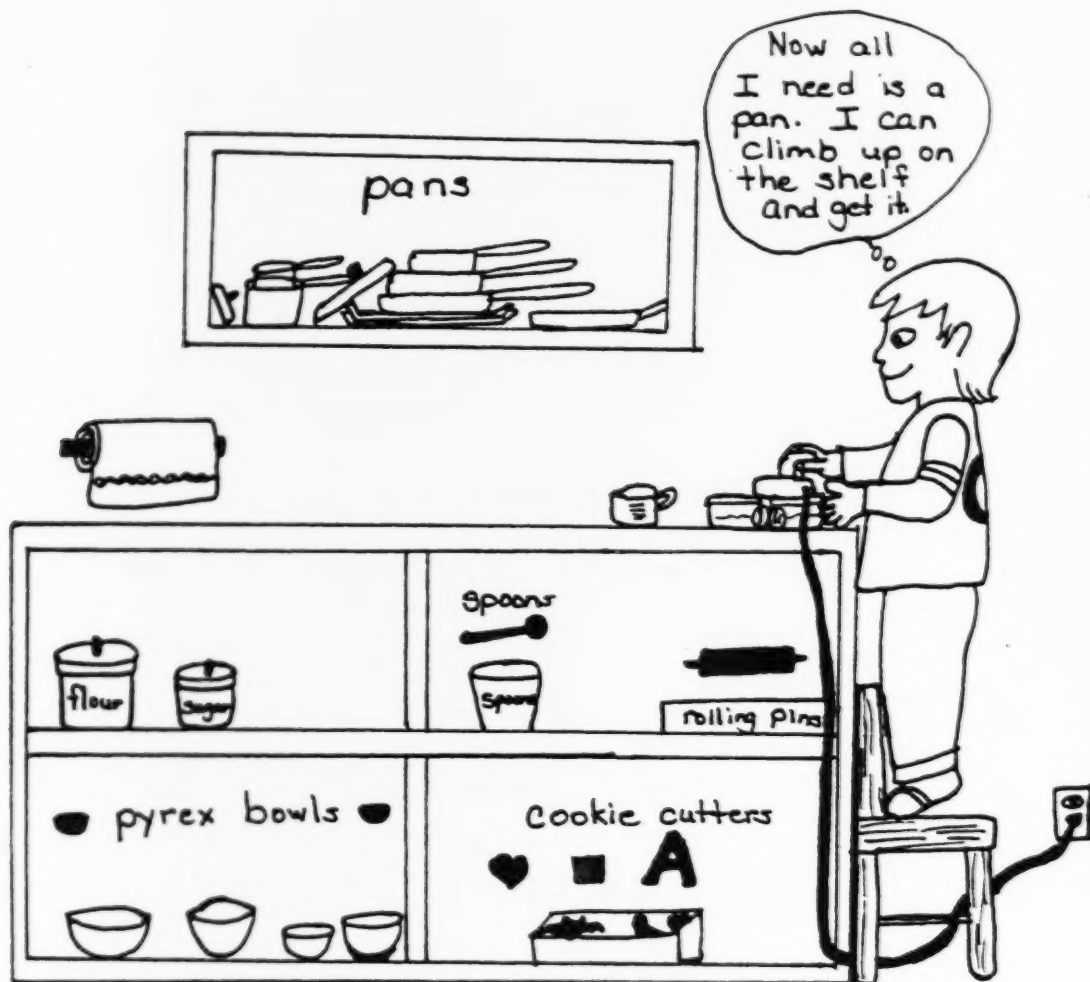


To Remember





What are the children gaining from this activity?

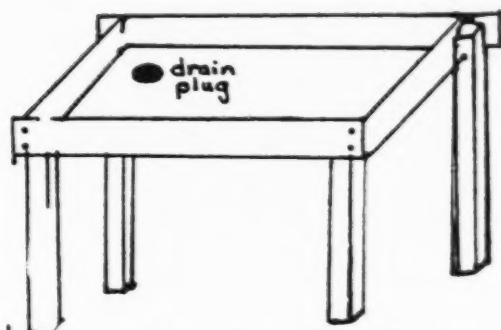


Do you see anything wrong with this cooking center?

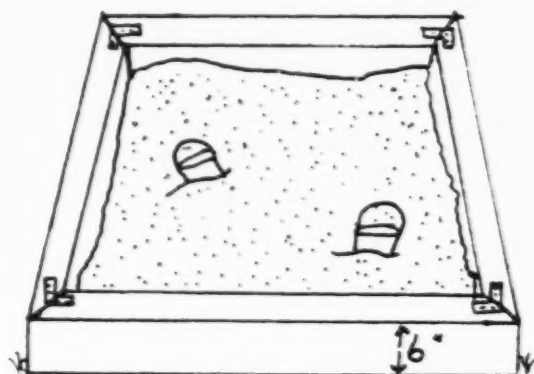


What are the benefits?

Materials for Sand/Waterplay



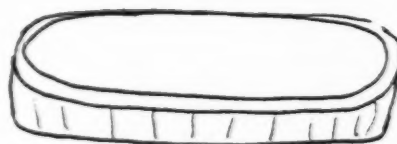
large water trough of zinc or plastic (wading pool)



wooden sandbox



washtub on cinder blocks

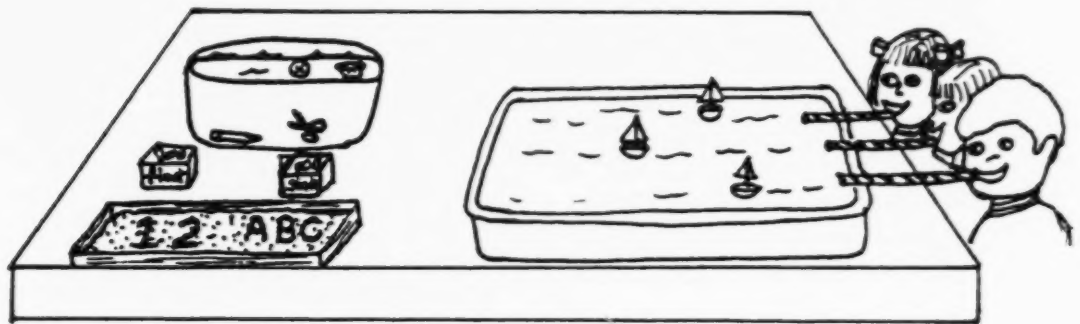


wading pool or old bathtub

Would you have to buy these things?
What other items could parents donate

ideas from
Day, B. (1983)
Open Learning
p. 161

Sand/Waterplay



In the picture are three activities.

What benefits will they get from each one

float or sink

sandbox

sailboats